

Ancient Chinese Secret

For Sudoku and Bell Players

Jeff Morris
2007

Introduction

Ancient Chinese Secret is a sonic performance piece that exploits the inflated mystery of unseen goings-on. In live performance, the details on the paper cannot be seen by the audience, and the sounds produced are only indirectly related to the main task of the performers. In recorded or radio performance, the mystery is heightened because the performers cannot be seen, making the sound seem even more ancient, Chinese, and secret (although they may not be any of these things).

Performance Notes

- Requirements:
 - Three to eight performers
 - One Sudoku puzzle for each performer, with a difficulty rating selected with the performability of this piece in mind
 - One standalone writing surface for each performer
 - One writing instrument for each performer
 - One long-ringing percussion instrument, e.g., a bell, cymbal, gong, timpano, monochord, etc., freely standing, for each performer
 - One striking instrument for each performer, if it is not appropriate or effective to strike it with the performer's writing instrument
 - Amplification for instruments, voices, or puzzles as needed
- Each performer should be able to easily reach his or her instrument and strike it while still looking at the puzzle.
- Vertical barlines indicate events that should be synchronized among all performers.
- While solving the puzzle, each performer should work independently of the others.
- Phonetic symbols used:
 - /ə/ as in *bubble*
 - /fa/ as in *fall*
 - /go/ as in *goat*
 - /dɛ/ as in *dent*
 - /ri/ a flap, as in the Spanish *caro*

About the Composer

Jeff Morris is an Assistant Lecturer in computer music and coordinator of technology facilities for the Department of Performance Studies at Texas A&M University. He has studied at the Florida State University and the University of North Texas, where he served on the staff of the Center for Experimental Music and Intermedia. Dr. Morris composes for traditional instruments, fixed electronic media, and interactive electronics. His works have been performed internationally and include multimedia works and collaborations with dance artists. Notable events include the eXtensible Toy Piano Project, the Bonk Festival of New Music, Electronic Music Midwest, and the Ybor Festival of the Moving Image. He has also given presentations and performances at conferences including the International Computer Music Conference and International Society for Improvised Music.

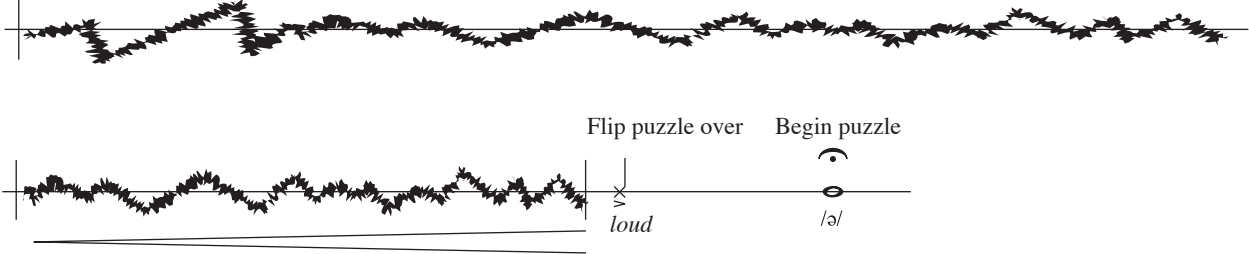
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In the manner of ancient Chinese dudes

Rub puzzle face down surface loudly, with sporadic accents. If the result is too quiet, also growl.



Try to stretch each line out until the next number is placed in the puzzle. If a number is placed earlier than expected, finish playing the current line rapidly, and immediately begin a new line.

Solve puzzle

When 1 is placed

loud

When 2 is placed

loud quiet

When 3 is placed

loud quiet

When 4 is placed

loud quiet

Sing at any pitch level

When 5 is placed

/fa/ loud /go/ /d/ /i/

When 6 is placed

loud quiet

When 7 is placed

loud quiet

When 8 is placed

loud

When 9 is placed

loud quiet

If last ring ends before next number is placed

/ə/

If you complete your puzzle

loud

Angrily tear your puzzle into several pieces

loud

If you make an error in your puzzle

grumble

Every time a performer places a number

sigh contentedly

/a/

After all performers have completed their puzzles

/a/ /a/ /a/

grumble grumble grumble